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THE RUSSELL REPORT

MEMORANDUM to the Board of Trustees
of the University of Illinois

FROM George D. Stoddard
President of the University

MARCH, 1951

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MEMORANDUM

To the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois

From George D. Stoddard
President of the University

On the "Report of the Study of the Structure of the State Tax-Supported System of Higher Education in Illinois"

Made by a Staff Under the Direction of the
Division of Higher Education
Office of Education
Federal Security Agency
Washington, D. C.

MARCH, 1951

FOREWORD

This Memorandum to the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois discusses the report of the Study of the Structure of the State Tax-Supported System of Higher Education which was made at the request of the Governor of Illinois by a staff from the Division of Higher Education of the Office of Education, Federal Security Agency. The report of the Study, dated December 13, 1950, was printed by authority of the State of Illinois and was made available to the public in January, 1951.

The Study was made under the supervision of Dr. John Dale Russell, Director of the Division of Higher Education in the Office of Education. It is referred to, for the sake of brevity, as the "Russell Report."

At a meeting of the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois on January 23, 1951, I submitted a preliminary Memorandum on the Russell Report based on a first reading. At the annual meeting of the Board of Trustees on March 13, 1951, I submitted this second Memorandum. (The first Memorandum is presented as an Appendix.)

George D. Stoddard
President of the University of Illinois

Urbana, Illinois
March, 1951

SECOND MEMORANDUM

PART ONE

On January 23rd, 1951, soon after the distribution of the Report of the Study of the Structure of the State Tax-Supported System of Higher Education in Illinois (John Dale Russell, Chairman), I submitted a memorandum for the information of the Board.[1] It was understood that this would be followed by a more explicit statement.

I have now had an opportunity to analyze the Russell Report in some detail. However, it is my intention to emphasize only the main issues and to propose some solutions that were overlooked by the Russell survey staff.

In the first memorandum I pointed out:

(1) That the Russell Report erred in its interpretation of the actions of the University of Illinois with respect to its Undergraduate Division at Galesburg.

(2) That the Russell Report erred similarly with respect to the Undergraduate Division in Chicago (Navy Pier).

(3) That the consequence of these two errors, and of other misconceptions, was a failure to include (as a way to improve coordination in higher education) an additional alternative, namely, the California-type of control in which the state university predominates.

(4) That, for reasons given, all the Russell alternatives except Alternative II, as revised, should be rejected.

Before considering alternatives further, I should like to refer to a few statements in the Russell Report.

We read (page 3):

" . . . the most urgent situation demanding a solution is the problem of the general overhead control of higher education in the State."

[1] See Appendix, p. 12.

This theme dominates the report although there is little to indicate why this problem is, in fact, urgent. I should say, rather, that the *most urgent* problems in higher education in the State are:

(a) to improve the quality of instruction, research and public service in all the institutions of higher learning;

(b) to extend the privileges of higher education to that large segment of the intellectually qualified youth population now denied them.

We read (page 5):

"The attitude in this report is that the people of Illinois are responsible for choosing from among these suggested alternatives, or combinations of items from these alternatives, the particular steps that are at present feasible and that seem most likely to accomplish desirable results."

Clearly, this statement in the foreword begs the question. There are other alternatives; there are other items. In suppressing them, the Russell Report quietly tips the scales in a certain direction.

What is this direction?

In a nutshell, it is that the State ought to have a central agency in Springfield to control all State-supported higher education. This idea appears repeatedly in the Report. It is offered as a preconceived solution. It so dominates the authors of the Report that they fail to evaluate certain basic issues.

For example, we read (page 11):

" . . . when competing programs minister to small groups of students or produce more graduates than can be absorbed in the positions for which preparation is given, the waste and inefficiency should not be condoned."

Now this quotation is not in line with modern educational thought. Certain types of programs, as in mathematical, philosophical or medical work, are likely to appeal only to small groups of students in a given location. About a dozen competing small groups of professors and students produced almost all we know about atomic fission. It is right and proper for a university to covet the emergence of such groups as an opportunity for its best brains.

But the chief error is to trim higher education to some nose-count of positions available in a particular field. Every such attempt has failed. Two years ago our engineering educators were fearful that we were producing too many engineers. Now, in the Spring of 1951, the potential shortage of engineers is so great as to constitute a definite military and industrial hazard. There are forces in our economy that tend to establish an elastic connection between supply and demand, but they are beyond the control of "coordinating agencies." Although

we have a dramatic shortage of personnel in all the health professions, it is only with great reluctance that governors and legislative bodies in any state in the Union move toward amelioration. The student talent is there; the service demand is there. The lag is in buildings, equipment and teaching personnel. The lack is money.

There is no fixed number of jobs in any field. Who can say how many persons will be needed in the next 30 years in nuclear power plants, military affairs, government, commerce or communications? Higher education not only prepares for jobs; it encourages persons to discover, develop and apply new principles. It puts a high value on learning, pure and applied. It creates both supply and demand. By any standards available in 1920, the present need for the college graduate in certain fields would appear fantastic.

If the aim of higher education is to develop straight thinking and to improve human relations, who can say that college graduates are in excess? Who can say that any person successfully pursuing the liberal arts and sciences is wasting his time? (There are those who claim that *everybody else* is wasting time, but I do not hold with these extremists, even though they go back to Socrates to find support.) In a balanced program, the student advances notably along both general and special lines.

Another theme that penetrates the Russell Report is a strong reliance on uniformity. When this theme is overemphasized it degenerates into a concept of mediocrity.

Thus the Russell Report refers to a section of the Works Survey of 1945. This survey listed 12 states that had created a single board for all their institutions of higher education. All 12 of the institutions at the top of the systems are well known in the educational field, but only two meet the requirements for membership in the Association of American Universities. Only one can be considered a leader. In this latter case there is one state university, one land-grant college and a state teachers college that confines itself to teacher education. This situation is different from Illinois which now has three state universities, two state colleges and one state teachers college. At the time of the Works Survey the State-supported higher institutions in Illinois, with the exception of the University of Illinois, were either Normal Universities or Teachers Colleges. In the last six years most of these institutions have tended to move toward the general college. The University, paradoxically, faced with a tremendous demand from the teaching profession, has turned increasingly toward teacher education.

From the Report (page 13):

> "From the point of view of the State, the program of higher education is a unitary service. The money to support it comes from a single State treasury. The program must serve needs that are State-wide. As soon, however, as more than one institution is set up to render the service in higher education, each tends to develop its own program in accordance with the designs of its own leadership. Each institution tends to compete with all the others for appropriations, for students, and for the favorable attention of the general public."

Now perhaps the program of higher education in Illinois should be unitary, monolithic, but that is not thus far the "point of view of the State." The State, according to the acts of successive General Assemblies, has favored diversity in both public and private institutions. A single state treasury also supports roads, health and welfare and hundreds of enterprises that resemble neither higher education nor each other.

What these programs have in common is a recognized need on the part of citizens. There is bound to be a diversity in function. The question is, To what extent should there be, in higher education, unity in the formation and execution of policies?

PART TWO

It may be generally agreed that 1951 is a good time to study the reorganization of public higher education in the State of Illinois. Among other factors, the following enter into this timeliness:

(1) The trial status of Southern Illinois University under a separate Board of Trustees whose terms expire August 31, 1951.

(2) The continued unrest of the colleges under the State Teachers College Board as at present organized.

(3) The recognized need for better facilities in public higher education in Chicago.

(4) The increased cost of public education at all levels.

Since these factors bear upon the progress of the University of Illinois, various members of the University staff have studied the implications of the Russell Report. We believe that the Report has accomplished a valuable purpose in directing attention to certain problems, even though some of us regard its five alternative plans as incomplete. We appreciate also the patient work of Dr. John Dale Russell and his associates and the foresight of the Governor in setting up the Committee.

I think the first memorandum and my remarks in Part One show why we are dubious about the effectiveness of any plan that transfers policy-making authority from a board of trustees to a superimposed coordinating board presumably operating from Springfield. Such a plan (Alternative III in the Russell Report) has received serious study. We have come to the conclusion that the price to be paid for unity under this plan would be a subtle decline in the quality and zestfulness of the academic life. For a governing body to be removed one more step from the work of professors and students is to invite decisions that hamper growth and freedom.

Without further preamble I should like to bring to the attention of the Board four major proposals. They are, in effect, a substitute for the five options offered by the Russell Committee.

Proposal I — Minimum Reform

(A) Adopt Alternative II, page 54 of the Russell Report, with one exception:

It reads:

"**Alternative II.** Continue the present three boards with modifications of their authority. The modifications suggested are as follows:

"(1) Remove institutions of higher education from the jurisdiction of the State Code Department of Registration and Education;

"(2) Set up a single merit system for non-academic personnel in all the State institutions of higher education;

"(3) Set up a single purchasing authority for all the State institutions of higher education, separating this function from the control of the State Purchasing Office;

"(4) Possibly remove the State teachers colleges and Southern Illinois University from the supervision of the State Architect's Office (the desirability of this step is questioned);

"(5) Give the State Teachers College Board authority to select its own officers;

"(6) Provide for a succession in the membership of the State Teachers College Board when the Governor fails to make an appointment;

"(7) Change the name of the State Teachers College Board to 'State College Board';

"(8) Change the method of selecting members for the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois."

For the reasons given in my memorandum of January 23rd, I should delete paragraph (8) above.

(B) Strengthen the work of the Council on Higher Education by providing a paid Executive Secretary to be nominated and financed, for rotating one-year terms, by the respective members of the Council.

(C) Add to the staff of the State Director of Finance an expert assistant in the field of public higher education.

Proposal II — Limited Reform

(A) Place Southern Illinois University under the State Teachers College Board as reorganized in accordance with the first seven terms of Alternative II of the Russell Report.

(B) Strengthen the work of the Council on Higher Education by providing a paid Executive Secretary to be nominated and financed, for rotating one-year terms, by the respective members of the Council.

(C) Add to the staff of the State Director of Finance an expert assistant in the field of public higher education.

Proposal III — Moderate Reform

(A) Reorganize the State Teachers College Board in accordance with the first seven terms of Alternative II in the Russell Report.

(B) Constitute Southern Illinois University as a branch of the University of Illinois, with emphasis upon the functions of:

(1) A teachers college.

(2) A community liberal arts college.

(3) Terminal curricula of special interest to the southern region.

(The University of Illinois has shown no eagerness to acquire Southern Illinois University as a branch. The most obvious location for an additional campus of the University of Illinois is not in Carbondale, but in Chicago. All expert observers agree on this point. Nevertheless, it seems to me, if Southern Illinois University is not to return to its historic rôle as a teachers college, and a community college under a reorganized Teachers College Board, it should consider, as an alternative, a merger with the University of Illinois. Either step would markedly reduce the hazards of confusion and duplication. It would pave the way for effective cooperation between two boards of trustees whose jurisdiction would be well defined.)

(C) Establish in Chicago, as a branch of the University of Illinois, a new four-year college emphasizing teacher education.

(D) Establish in Chicago as a branch of the University of Illinois, a pilot terminal (two-year) institute of applied arts and sciences.

(E) Authorize the development of blueprints for a full-fledged campus of the University of Illinois at Chicago. This would imply an eventual enrollment of 20,000 students, supplementing a maximum enrollment at Urbana-Champaign of 20,000 students.

(F) Strengthen the work of the Council on Higher Education by providing a paid Executive Secretary to be nominated and financed, for rotating one-year terms, by the respective members of the Council.

(G) Add to the staff of the State Director of Finance an expert assistant in the field of public higher education.

Proposal IV — Long-Range Reform

(A) Extend the University of Illinois under a single board of trustees, bringing all the State tax-supported institutions of higher education into the University system, with branches at the present locations of the separate institutions.

(B) Establish a full-fledged branch of the University of Illinois at Chicago, to absorb also the functions of a teachers college and of a terminal institute.

We should then have the **University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**, the **University of Illinois at Chicago** (to include as parallel units the present professional colleges and the proposed new campus), the **University of Illinois at Normal**, the **University of Illinois at Carbondale**, the **University of Illinois at DeKalb**, the **University of Illinois at Macomb** and the **University of Illinois at Charleston.**

Such a system would parallel the successful plan now in operation in the State of California. It would make for diversity within a general plan of coordination. It would leave to individual communities, financially aided by the State, the responsibility for developing the 13th and 14th grades either as junior colleges or as terminal institutes. (The institute proposed for Chicago would serve as a pilot study and training center.)

Since there would be no one body of alumni to make recommendations to the political parties, it is suggested that the appointment of the board of trustees of the greater University of Illinois be made by the Governor, with the consent of the General Assembly, and that three of possibly 12 members be *ex officio, viz.,* the Governor of the State, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the General Superintendent of Schools of Chicago.

In my judgment, in an ascending order of effectiveness the four proposals above would solve most of the problems brought forth in the Russell Report. There would evolve an optimum degree of coordination without loss of the time-honored freedom that nourishes the academic life.

The establishment of new institutions as a part of the general University plan would be under control. Also the new board of trustees, through a small expert staff, could undertake the professional work underlying the certifying and chartering of new private institutions of higher and professional education. A University of Illinois system would automatically replace all the revisions recommended in Alternative II of the Russell Report.

Clearly Proposal IV calls for substantial educational, financial and administrative adjustments. **These changes are feasible only if persons professionally concerned, state leaders and interested citizens and taxpayers believe it to be a move in the right direction.**

With or without such changes, the aim is, through better instruction, research and public service, to meet the needs of the people of Illinois. In this vast enterprise the critically important rôle of the private independent colleges and universities must also be recognized. As a nation, we face an economic, military and cultural crisis. We have need of our full ethical and spiritual resources. The total contribution of a few great states like Illinois may be decisive.

APPENDIX

Appendix

FIRST MEMORANDUM

I have now read quickly the printed copy of the report on higher education in Illinois submitted by Dr. John Dale Russell and his staff.

As a whole, the report is of considerable merit. It calls attention to some defects in administrative principle and practice. It locates certain sources of grievance among the colleges under the State Teachers College Board. It presents various alternatives in a clear fashion.

Unfortunately the Report contains an error of fact that damages one of its main conclusions. In one or two other respects it does not, I believe, represent informed opinion over the State.

We read, for example, (page 46): "The branch (of the University of Illinois) that was started at Galesburg with considerable fanfare was abruptly closed out when some financial support became necessary from general university sources."

Actually, the undergraduate division at Galesburg was started with only 400 students registered at the late opening date of the first semester. The enrollment the second year approached the maximum for which the facility was designed and then began to drop off. To quote from the brochure, *The College Made in a Month:*

> "When the enrollment fell below 1,000 in the second semester of 1948-49, the needs of the State for hospital facilities were again advanced, and Governor Adlai E. Stevenson asked the University to turn the plant over to the State Department of Public Welfare. This the Trustees agreed to do in the belief that a property of such value should be used to meet the greatest public need."

This action was in conformity with the original plan of the Galesburg undergraduate division as a veteran facility. Members of the University staff and of the Board of Trustees, assisted by government and military officials, made a prodigious effort in establishing the Division in the first place. They were reluctant to bring its educational services to a close. The closing had nothing to do with the securing of financial support from general University sources.

Also on page 46, the Russell Report states:

> "The branch at Navy Pier in Chicago has been held to a lower division program, though there is clear evidence that large numbers of students could be served by upper division and specialized curriculums."

It has not been at any time the intention to set up a full four-year program at the Navy Pier. The Board of Trustees has not authorized such action. As at Galesburg, the purpose was primarily to take care of returning veterans and to operate the Undergraduate Division at

Navy Pier only as long as student demand would warrant it. The chief gain has been in housing, since students coming to Urbana-Champaign would have to seek a place to live, while in Chicago they live at home.

My general position, which is shared by other members of the administrative staff, is that eventually the University should have a major branch in Chicago. This is referred to in my *Four-Year Report* as follows (page 21):

> "The popularity of the Chicago Undergraduate Division reveals the continuing pressure for a four-year branch of the University of Illinois in Chicago. It has been pointed out that half the population of Illinois lives in the Chicago area. The establishment of a permanent branch, however, will depend on finances — on securing a new staff, a campus, and an adequate plant."

In short, our sights for a branch of the University of Illinois are much higher than is consistent with retaining the Navy Pier as a permanent fixture. We have been conservative toward expansion there because of the high cost that would be devoted to a facility eventually to be relinquished.

However, the important thing about these misconceptions in the report is the reason for their citation in the first place. It is held that had there been an over-all State board of regents for higher education in Illinois, such things as the alleged impoverishment of the branches of the University could not have taken place. This is another way of saying that such a board would have insisted upon the retention of the Galesburg facility, even with a dropping enrollment, and that it would have insisted also upon making a full four-year branch of the facilities at Navy Pier. If these are outstanding illustrations of the probable effectiveness of such a board, I am somewhat cool to its formation.

Now, let us turn to Alternatives I to V as given on pages 54-56.

Alternative I (Give legal authority to the present Council on Higher Education to exercise coordinating functions over the six institutions.)

I agree that this is impossible.

Alternative II (Continue the present three boards with modifications of their authority.) Eight modifications are suggested, and I agree with the main substance of the first seven.

Modification (8) reads: "Change the method of selecting members for the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois." There is no reason why this problem should not be studied, but I do not agree that the present system leads to an ineffective control of policies for

the University or to disservice to the State of Illinois. There is no conflict as between loyalty to the University and loyalty to the State as a whole. To me it seems unlikely that "appointment by the Governor with confirmation by the State Senate" would increase the effectiveness or the distinction of the Board. I say this with four years of experience with a board of regents chosen by a legislature and four years under the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois. Although recommended by the University alumni, the Trustees are nominated by the party conventions and are elected by the people. It is my experience that they have shown no partiality whatever to alumni groups but have sought to serve both the University and the State in all matters of public policy.

Alternative III (Create a State board for higher education which would exercise only the functions necessary to the coordination of the State program of higher education.)

The difficulties here lie with the interpretation of the word *coordination.* The Report indicates, as one function of the board, "Determination of institutional programs." Here again the question is, how much freedom would be left to each institution of higher education?

Another function, according to the Report, would be "Review of institutional policies to obtain uniformity." Now there are some areas in which uniformity is desirable, as in retirement systems and civil service regulations. But the idea of uniformity can easily degenerate to a concept of mediocrity. When educational and research programs are leveled off, they do not generally get leveled *up* but leveled *down.* The pace of a man, a department, or a University should not be geared to the slowest or the least imaginative. Yet, this is a danger when a single board with "A strong staff, headed by an Executive Secretary," starts to secure "uniformity among all the institutions."

I believe the necessary degree of uniformity could be secured under Alternative II above.

Alternative IV (This would create a State Board of Regents for Higher Education headed by a Chancellor of the State System.) The institutional boards would be abolished.

I think that this alternative has in it some of the inherent weaknesses of Alternative III and, in addition, a few of its own. This plan would tend to reduce the administrative leadership in the separate institutions to a minor degree of planning and responsibility.

Alternative V (To create a State Board of Education over all public education — elementary, secondary, vocational and higher.)

Until recently this was the plan in operation in the State of New York. Over the years certain basic defects became apparent, such that when the State University of New York was created a new board was created also. It has not proved possible for an over-all board effectively to supervise education at all these levels. One result of the system was to place the State of New York, which is in many ways a leader in public affairs, last among the 48 states to found a state university.

An Alternative VI, which could be added, but was thrown out because of the premises indicated at the beginning of this report, would be to establish a full four-year branch of the University of Illinois at Chicago and also a branch at Carbondale (the present Southern Illinois University).

I have already suggested that when the time is propitious, namely, when there is a prospect of securing a site, building a plant and recruiting a well-rounded staff in Chicago, we should plan the University of Illinois at Chicago for a probable enrollment of 20,000 students.

Similarly, some thought has been given to a branch at Carbondale. The question came up at the time of the hearings on the present organization of the separate board for Southern Illinois University. In a statement for the Committee on Education of the House of Representatives, dated June 1, 1949, I said:

> "I should be glad to give further consideration to such a plan. There would be some difficulty in adjusting the standards of the two institutions, but I believe the problems could be worked out. In saying this I am not speaking for the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois which has not considered the matter. However, I feel that the University of Illinois should not take the initiative; it should certainly not attempt to secure Southern Illinois University as a branch. If the people in the southern region and the authorities responsible for Southern Illinois University feel that this is a desirable outcome, I should favor setting up a plan of study to present the *pros* and *cons*. This could be done through an external professional committee acting in an advisory capacity.
>
> "At the University of Illinois we have the highest respect for the staff of Southern Illinois. We are sensitive to the needs of the southern counties. If it is held that the establishment of a branch of the University of Illinois at Carbondale would be helpful to the region, and especially to the young people of college age, we should give the plan our full support."

In short, at first reading, I am not convinced that the Russell Committee has made a case for the alternatives it seems to favor.

It has not presented a balanced picture of the relation of the University of Illinois to its former Undergraduate Division at Galesburg or to its present Undergraduate Division in Chicago.

It has not explored the possibility of a very large branch of the University at Chicago — with a full-fledged campus — or of incorporating Southern Illinois University into the University of Illinois.

If these two acts were accomplished in the future, the chain of teachers colleges and community colleges under a separate board would constitute a parallel approach to the problem of higher education. These colleges at present, with special responsibilities in teaching and community service, have much in common. A Board that pays attention to their needs alone is kept busy at a high level of public service. Perhaps a coordinating committee among the Boards would be helpful at this time.

I do not see how the existence of a State board of education could have resolved, without appeal, the matter of the teaching of vocational agriculture at the Illinois State Normal University. The Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois, on the basis of a factual report, made a clear recommendation on this matter. It pointed out the lack of need. The burden of proof was on any institution or board to demonstrate to the U. S. Office of Education that federal funds should be made available for this purpose outside the University of Illinois.

There are various ways to accomplish coordination and reasonable uniformity, but the Russell Report concentrates upon the desirability of investing great and new power in a State board for higher education or a State board of regents. What the authors of the Report hope to accomplish by this (in addition to coordination and uniformity) is greater economy and a clarification of function — both worthy aims. It strikes me that this could be accomplished by simpler measures, leaving for the Director of Finance, the Budgetary Commission, the General Assembly and the Governor the necessary all-State powers of evaluating, comparing and pruning.

Other functions of value mentioned in the Report, such as the study of the needs of the State for higher education and the review of institutional policies, could well be carried out by the present Council on Higher Education.

As I have said, these remarks are simply my first reactions and are subject to change.

The Report will be reviewed shortly by the Council on Higher Education which doubtless will make recommendations for the consideration of all parties concerned. Concurrently at the University we shall make a thorough analysis of the proposals.

Following the wishes of the Board of Trustees, I shall be glad later to present reports from the Council and from the University staff.

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